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ABSTRACT

The three-week unit dealing with important moments in life when values are learned is designed to be incorporated into an eighth grade English language arts class. It is part of a series of guides developed by teachers at an institute conducted by the Public Education Religion Studies Center at Wright State University. A major objective of the unit is to have students read, examine, and evaluate literature which shows how specific aspects of life can be dealt with. Through the various stories and poems which are suggested for the students to read, the students will think about the life-style and world view of themselves and of their own family as they compare their attitudes with those portrayed in the stories. The unit is arranged into six parts. Part one provides a brief introduction. Part two, Content, outlines generalizations, subject matter, and vocabulary. Part III lists six cognitive and five affective goals and objectives. Part IV, the major part of the document, briefly describes 25 initiatory, developmental, and culminating activities. Activities engage the students in writing, discussing, and participating in projects such as tracing their family trees. Part V provides nine evaluation suggestions. The document concludes with lists of instructional resources for the teacher and student. (Author/BC)

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SPECIAL TIMES IN FAMILIES

prepared for
Eighth Grade Language Arts

by
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Kettering, Ohio

for the
Teacher Education Institute on
the Religious Dimension of World Cultures
1976-77

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SPECIAL TIMES IN FAMILIES

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the values of reading literature is to help the reader define his role by examining and evaluating the experiences described in the material he reads. By teaching literature in thematic units, specific aspects of life can be dealt with. A unit on "Special Times in Families" deals with those important moments where values are learned. This learning can take place in conflict as well as in harmony. Through the various stories and poems, the student will think about the life-style and world view of himself and of his own family as he compares his attitudes with those portrayed in the stories.

In the stories about celebration and tradition, the student will have a chance to see how both contribute stability and continuity to life. He will read about traditions and religious experiences that are different from his and will have an opportunity to examine another person's point of view.

As he identifies with characters facing moral problems, the student will see how he has acquired attitudes from his family. It is hoped that the student will appreciate his heritage but also realize that he can constantly evaluate those familial attitudes in light of his own ongoing experiences.

This unit is an outgrowth of the PERSC/NEH Institute on the Religious Dimension of World Cultures held at Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio, in 1976-77. It reflects the understanding of religion in both a narrow and a broad sense: that religion can be conceptualized as a formal, structured belief system within an established religious institutional framework, and that it also can be understood as any faith or set of values to which an individual or group gives ultimate loyalty. In the broadest sense, then, this unit deals with the "religious dimension" of life since it encourages the student to explore the values, the world view and life-style, and the traditions and celebrations of life of himself and his family as he reads adolescent literature.

This unit is designed as a three-week unit for a heterogeneously grouped eighth grade English Language Arts class. There are more stories than needed for the time period and other stories could easily be substituted for those suggested. This unit could be taught any time during the year after the first four to six weeks. The activities in the unit would be more successful after the class and the teacher have established some level of trust.

II. CONTENT

A. Generalizations/Concepts:

1. A family develops a particular life-style which reflects its world view.
2. An individual's decisions are affected by the world view acquired from his family.
3. Experiences in the family contribute to the development of an individual life-style.
4. Parental values help shape the values of children. Sometimes the influence leads to adoption of similar values; in other instances children develop different values in rebellion against parents.
5. Cultural differences affect family life.
6. Traditions and religious customs are different, even among families of the same cultural background. These are not "right" or "wrong," but are special and important to the individual family.

A. Generalizations/Concepts (cont'd):
   7. Seeing a situation from another's point of view helps to bring about understanding within families and between families.
   8. Each individual can learn to be a positive contributor in his family.

B. Subject Matter:
   1. Family structures.
      a. Read stories about family structures other than the conventional mother, father and children.
      b. Work in groups on definition of "family."
   2. Values learned from family life.
      a. Read stories that reflect values as taught by parents.
      b. Do a "Dear Abby" exercise which prompts students to think through their values.
      c. View and discuss filmstrip, "Rites of Passage: Initiations to Adulthood."
   3. Traditions developed in families.
      a. Read stories that deal with traditions and/or religious customs of different cultures.
      b. Complete exercises which direct the students' thinking toward traditions of their own families.
   4. Individual contributions to families.
      a. Read stories which show how different members can take part in family responsibility.
      b. Complete an exercise on students "creating" an ideal family.
      c. Do individual reports which require outside reading and/or research to discover more about family life.
      d. Have students write in their journals to explore their own feelings about their role in the family and how the family influences their thought and action.

C. Vocabulary:

monogamy	extended family	confirmation	synagogue
polygamy	life-style	catechism	
bigamy	adolescence	christening	
patriarchal	sibling	baptism	
matriarchal	heir	Bible	
equalitarian	Talmud	religion	
dowry	bar mitzvah	church	
nuclear family	bat mitzvah	temple	

III. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A. Cognitive:
   1. Understands and interprets material from stories and poems by answering questions on various levels. (Sample questions: Evaluation. Section A, 1, a, b and c.)
   2. Identifies point of view in selected readings. (Sample questions: Evaluation. Section A, 1, d.)
   3. Demonstrates rules of correct writing in written responses. (Detailed in Evaluation. Section A, 3.)
   4. Demonstrates an understanding of the vocabulary used in this unit.
   5. Recognizes that his opinions and decisions are influenced by his family background. (Based on a discussion following the first phase of the questionnaire as explained in Evaluation. Section A, 2.)
   6. Demonstrates the ability to gather information from books or human resources and then to present this information in an interesting manner.

Some of the above are skill-building activities which would be a part of the English Language Arts classroom throughout the entire year.

B. Affective:
1. Writes more than the required responses in student journal. (Explained under Activities. Section B, 12.)
2. Volunteers information from his own family experiences.
3. Demonstrates a change in attitude toward his own family. (See Evaluation. Section C, 4.)
4. Demonstrates tolerance for individuals who hold different beliefs and world view. (Observable during class discussion.)
5. Chooses books that deal with family theme, for pleasure reading.

IV. POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES

A. Initiatory:
1. Before discussing the unit, distribute a questionnaire which pertains to the family. Some questions deal with simple factual information about the student's own family, but most of the questions deal with attitudes. Some sample questions might be: Do you have regular responsibilities in your family? Do you think your responsibilities are fair? Are you paid for the work that you do? Do you get an allowance? Do you think that the way you are given money is fair? Is your family important to you? Does your family care about you? Do you and your family do things together? Do you have any family customs or traditions which you observe? Allow the students ample time to give this survey thoughtful attention and insist that they answer in complete sentences. This clarifies their thinking as they restate the question in their answers. Allow them the privilege of not answering a question if it seems too personal to them.
2. Have each student write out a definition for "family." Then have the students get into pairs and try to agree on one definition. Next have the pairs join so that four students are working together. Have them try to agree on one definition that the group will accept. Discuss.
3. Read "The Blanket" by Floyd Dell. This is a story of a boy who lives with his father and grandfather and of the emotions that erupt as Father decides to remarry and to put Grandfather in an old folks' home. Students will easily side with Petey, who wants his family to stay as it is rather than change to what would seem most "ideal": a boy and a father and a mother. Discussion will help students think through who or what it is that makes up a family.
4. Read "The Woman Who Had No Eye for Small Detail" by William Maxwell. This is a story of a maiden lady who "inherits" a family of small children after the death of her sister. This is another example of a family that is not the conventional mother, father and children.
5. Distribute to the class an introductory article on "family." The Family Anthology from Scholastic has such an article but the same article appears in the World Book Encyclopedia. Several words listed in the vocabulary list are defined in this article.
6. Read and discuss some creation stories to help get some perspective on the origin of families. Explanation should be made that there are many different theories about the origin of life and then of families. Care should be taken to be objective about this. Emphasis should be placed not on whether or not the story is true, but if accepted as true by the believer, what does the story tell us about the purpose and function of the family? Possible stories:
   a. Bible. Old Testament: Genesis 1 and 2.
   b. Greek mythology: Prometheus and Pandora.

B. Developmental:
1. Read "Comojadey, a Creole Christening" by Ricky Awuta-Coker. The customs and traditions involved in a Creole christening are vividly described in this story.

B. Developmental (cont'd):

This gives an opportunity to discover who Creoles are, and in talking about their ceremony, it gives the students a chance to look at other christening and baptism rituals. One possible technique for meaningful discussion here would be to have assigned the students, on the day before, the task of finding out about their own baptism, christening or other infant ceremony. Emphasis should be, at this point, what significance did this event have for the student and the family? Be sensitive to the fact that many students may not be part of a religious tradition that has an infant ceremony. Even if the family did not have a "religious" ceremony, was there any special event among family or friends?

2. As a follow-up to the christening story, ask the students to recall any special family customs or tradition that they have, either in their immediate family or with their extended family. Discuss what this means to the students and why they enjoy this custom. Are some of these rituals or traditions religious in origin?
3. Distribute a list of suggested projects for the students to choose from. Some ideas to put on the project sheet might be:
   a. Tell us about a family custom that is very different from yours. This may be from another culture or another religious tradition.
   b. Find out about life in a modern commune in America.
   c. Make your family tree as far back as you can. Tell us who you talked to in order to get your information.
   d. What do names mean? This could be family names or first names.
   e. Read one of the books from the list of books, or another, if approved by the teacher. Tell us about the book. (Books for this list appear in the student bibliography.) Many more possibilities could be added to the project list. The task of the student should be to compile interesting information either from books or persons, and then communicate this information to the class.
4. Read the short story, "Father and Son," by Phillip Roth. This is a story about a boy who refuses to observe Rosh Hashanah, and how it breaks his father's heart. Even though the boy knows that he is hurting his father, something inside of him demands that he assert himself at this time.
5. Read "The Apprentice" by Dorothy Canfield. This is the story of a teenaged girl who is resentful over the rules imposed upon her by her parents. Later, she finds it necessary to discipline her dog in order to teach him for his own good. The need for firmness with her dog gives her a glimpse of the responsibility of parenthood.
6. Read the play, "The Strangers That Came to Town," from the story by Ambrose Flack. This is a story of some poor immigrants who move to town. The father is a garbage collector, and the children in the story make fun of the family. Later, when the children play a mean trick on the immigrant family, their father hands out severe punishment as he tries to teach them a valuable lesson.
7. Read "The Kiskis" by May Vontver. This is a story of an immigrant family who homesteads in the midwest. The immigrant children are so ashamed of being different, they won't join the rest of the children for lunch. Both "The Strangers That Came to Town" and "The Kiskis" are good to help students see how people of a different cultural background have difficulty being accepted.
8. Read "Joey's Ball" by Norman Katkov. This is a story about a boy who cheats his father's customers to get some money to buy a ball for his team. Father passes on his values as he disciplines with love. This story lends itself to a good discussion of peer pressure.
9. Read the play, "Jacob and Esau" from the Bible. (The story appears in play form in The Living Bible.) This is another story which shows how values are passed down from parents. There is also good discussion material here about parents sometimes having favorites.

B. Developmental (cont'd):

10. Read "Mr. Chairman" by Frank and Ernestine Gilbreath. This is a humorous story of a family that decides to be democratic in all decisions. Problems arise as the children outnumber and therefore out-vote the parents.
11. Read "Winning and Losing" by Sarah Thonney. The father in this story pushes his son to succeed to achieve what the father hadn't been able to. The boy realizes and partly understands why the father is pushing him. This story is another that helps the student understand point of view both as a literary tool and as a means to empathize.
12. View the filmstrip, "Rites of Passage: Initiations to Adulthood," from Sunburst Communications. This explores ways in which society recognizes adult status, and how the family is an important setting for "rites of passage" in our society.
13. Write reactions in a journal. This can be done at any time that the student feels like writing. (He should know that this is private writing.) A journal is also an aid to discussion. After reading a story or completing an activity, the teacher asks a series of questions with short answers which will start the students' thinking. After the student has answered the questions in his journal, the teacher proceeds with the discussion. This gives everyone a chance to think through the questions before the discussion begins. The "eager" student is restrained from dominating the discussion, and the very timid one feels better about responding with some written information before him. If a student wants the teacher to read his journal entries, provisions should be made for this.
14. Write a "Dear Abby"-type letter, presenting a family problem. This may be real or made up. The following day, the teacher removes the names of the persons who wrote the letters and redistributes the letters. Students write answers to the letters and then share the letters.
15. Other stories, poems or plays could be substituted for these suggested. Some poems that could be used in this unit are listed in the bibliography.

C. Culminating:

1. Distribute a list of proverbs and sayings concerning the family. Have students write what they think these sayings mean and discuss.
   a. When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished at how much he had learned in seven years. (Mark Twain)
   b. Children should be seen and not heard. (proverb)
   c. An ounce of blood is worth more than a pound of friendship. (Spanish proverb)
   d. Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way. (Leo Tolstoy)
   e. A little hurt from a kin is worse than a big hurt from a stranger. (Jewish proverb)
   f. Spare the rod and spoil the child. (proverb)
2. Presentation of reports. In a relaxed atmosphere with chairs in a circle, if possible, the students may informally tell what they have discovered from books or people. The teacher should know ahead of time what the topics will be so he can guide the discussion following the reports.
3. Assign students the task of creating an ideal family. Have them decide such things as: how many are in the family, who earns the living, how the responsibilities are distributed, what the house is like, and how they spend their spare time. This allows the students to explore their values as they make these decisions.
4. Distribute the same questionnaire that the students reacted to on the first day of the unit. Ask them again to answer the questions, taking time to be specific with answers. Then give them the answers they had written on the first day. Ask them to comment on the changes in a written response which the teacher will collect.

V. EVALUATION

A. The students' accomplishments:
   1. Written responses to stories. The following questions are all based on one story called, "Joey's Ball." It would not be appropriate to use all of these questions on one story, but they are examples of different levels of questions. It is important to word questions carefully since much of the evaluation of the students will be on the discussion which follows the reading of a story.
      a. Why did Joey decide to go with his father to sell bananas? (Answer is clearly stated in material.)
      b. Compare his mother's and father's ways of getting Joey to do things. (Answer not clearly stated but implied in what they say and the way they say it.)
      c. Do you think Joey's father was right in having him return the money as he did? (They need to combine the information they derive from the story with their own values in order to formulate an answer.)
      d. This story is written from Joey's point of view. How does the author help you identify with Joey? What are some of the things the father would say if the story were written from his point of view? (They need to understand literary point of view, and they need to understand the father based on their reading in order to answer this question.)
      e. After a guided discussion on honesty, answer the following questions in a paragraph or two: How does a person's idea of right or wrong develop? What influences a person's view of right or wrong? Give examples.
   2. The student will answer questions from a questionnaire which deals mostly with his attitudes toward his family. Upon completion of that, he will be asked to read his responses from a similar questionnaire completed on the first day of the unit. Then he will be asked to respond in writing concerning his answers. Has his attitude changed since the beginning of the unit? In what way? Does he know why he feels differently now?
   3. The student will comply with the standards set early in the year for written responses, e.g., if questions can be answered in a statement, statement must be a well-formed, complete sentence. If responses require a paragraph or more, the material must be well-organized. All answers must follow rules for correct writing, e.g., indenting for paragraphs, using proper capitalization, punctuation and spelling, and correct usage.
   4. The student will choose a topic from a suggested list and, after gathering information from books or persons, will present this information in an interesting way to the class.
   5. The student will participate in the discussions following the stories, activities and reports.
   6. The student will demonstrate his knowledge and understanding of the vocabulary and terms used in this unit by using them in his writing and by identifying them in an objective test.

B. Evaluation of the unit:
   1. In an attempt to discover students' reactions to the unit, the specific stories and activities could be listed with the following choices:
      a. Helpful to me as I think about my own family.
      b. Interesting but not personally helpful.
      c. Not interesting or helpful.
   2. Blank spaces for comments and/or suggestions for improving the unit could be provided.
   3. The written response after completing the personal questionnaire could serve as an evaluation of the effectiveness of the unit as well as an evaluation of the students' attitudes.

VI. INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES

A. Teacher reference:

1. Families in another time or culture

Cooper, Paulette, ed. Growing Up Puerto Rican. New York: Arbor House, 1972.

Heaton, E.W. Everyday Life in Old Testament Times. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956.

Lewis, Oscar. The Children of Sanchez: Autobiography of a Mexican Family. New York: Random House, 1961.

2. General family theme

Cleaver, Nancy. The Treasury of Family Fun. Westwood, N.J.: Simon and Schuster, 1972.

Kephart, William M. The Family, Society, and the Individual. Third Edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972.

Young, Leotine. The Fractured Family. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1973.

3. The adolescent

Clark, Shirley M. and John P., Editors. Youth in Modern Society. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1972. Especially Chapter 3, "Family Roles and Youth." Holmes, Douglas and Monica. The Language of Trust: Dialogue of the Generations. Science House Inc., 1971.

Kraemer, Hazel V. Youth and Culture: A Human-Development Approach. Monterey, Ca.: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co., 1974. Especially "Adolescence" by Margaret Mead.

Seidman, Jerome M., ed. The Adolescent-A Book of Readings. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1960. Especially chapters 11. "The Adolescent and His Family," 16. "Religious Beliefs" and 17. "Ideals and Values."

Smith, Ernest A. American Youth Culture: Group Life in a Teenage Society. New York: The Free Press of Glencoe (A Division of Macmillan Co., 1962.) Especially Chapter 3. "The Family of Orientation."

B. Student reference:

1. Selections from Adventures for Readers. Book Two. Laureate Edition. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1963.
Flack, Ambrose. "The Strangers That Came to Town," adapted into a television play by William Bruckner.
Gilbreath and Carey, "Mr. Chairman."
Katkov, Norman. "Joey's Ball."
Vontver, May. "The Kiskis."

2. Selections from Adventures for Readers. Book Two. Classic Edition. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1968.
Canfield, Dorothy. "The Apprentice."
Shakespeare, William. "A Father's Advice to His Son" from Hamlet.

3. Selections from Family, a Scholastic Literature Unit Anthology. New York: Scholastic Book Services, a division of Scholastic Magazines Inc., 1972.
Awuta-coker, Ricky. "Comojadey, a Creole Christening."
Christensen, Harold T. "Family."

3. cont'd.
Dell, Floyd. "The Blanket."
Hershenson, Miriam. "Husbands and Wives." (poem)
Maxwell, William. "The Woman Who Had No Eye for Small Details."
McCartney and Lennon. "She's Leaving Home." (poem)
Thonney, Sarah. "Winning and Losing."
White, John G. "The Nortons."(poem)

4. The Living Bible
"Creation Story."
"Jacob and Esay."

C. Miscellaneous student references which could be listed on the students' project sheet:
Ashcraft, Norman, consultant. The American Family: Life-Styles in a Changing Society. Columbus, Ohio: Xerox Education Publications, 1975.

Bach, Marcus. Had You Been Born in Another Faith. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentiss-Hall, 1970.

Detwiler, Herbert J. How to Stand Up for What You Believe: A Teen-ager's Action Guide. New York: Association Press, 1968.

Doane, Gilbert H. Searching for Your Ancestors. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1973.

Goldhurst, Richard. America Is Also Jewish. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1972.

Helmbold, F. Wilbur. Tracing Your Ancestry. Birmingham: Oxmoor House, Inc., 1976.

Lambert, Eliose and Pei, Mario. Our Names, Where They Came from and What They Mean. New York: Lothrup, Lee and Shepard Co., Inc., 1960.

Meyer, Carolyn. Amish People, Plain Living in a Complex World. New York: Atheneum Press, 1976.

Purdy, Susan Gold. Jewish Holidays. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1969.

Tournier, Paul. The Naming of Persons. New York: Harper and Row, 1975.

Voss, Carl Herman. In Search of Meaning: Living Religions of the World. Cleveland, Ohio: The World Publishing Co., 1968.

D. Miscellaneous resources:
1. Filmstrip. Rites of Passage: Initiations to Adulthood. New York: Sunburst Communications, 1974.
2. Worksheets.
   a. "Making Sense of Our Lives," Argus Communications, 7440 Natchez, Il.
   b. "What If You...?" and "What Would You Do?"; Scholastic Magazines Inc., 50 West 44th Street, New York.

E. A sampling of adolescent literature on the family theme:
Blume, Judy. Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret. New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1970. Margaret's parents try to ignore religion but Margaret constantly talks with God. With parents of Catholic and Jewish backgrounds, she finds much to be confused about.

E. A sampling of adol. lit. on fam. theme (cont'd):
Bradbury, Bianca. In Her Father's Footsteps. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976. This is a story of the joys and sorrows of Jenny who lives with her veterinarian father.

_____. Laughter in Our House. New York: Washburn, 1964. Family life is disturbed when mother experiences mental illness.

Colman, Hila. Daughter of Discontent. New York: Morrow, 1971. Katherine Mitchell feels trapped and confused by her parents' expectations of her.

Doubtfire, Dianne. Escape on Monday. New York: Scholastic Book Service, 1970. A mother's insecurities cause her not to trust her teenaged daughter.

Felson, Henry G. Street Rod. New York: Random House, 1953. A story of the usual stresses that hit a family when the adolescent begins to assert independence.

Frank, Anne. The Diary of a Young Girl. New York: F. Watts, 1966. True story. The diary of a Jewish girl's trials as she and her family hide to escape capture by the Germans during World War II.

Gilbreath, Frank and Ernestine. Cheaper by the Dozen. New York: T.Y. Crowell Co., 1948. A humorous account of a large family.

Guy, Rosa. Friends. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973. Two teenaged girls who come from poor homes in New York find a beautiful friendship in each other.

Hamner, Earl Jr. The Homecoming. New York: Avon, 1973. The Spencer family consisting of mother, father and eight children live during the depression.

Hinton, S.E. The Outsiders. New York: Viking Press, 1967. Story of two rival gangs. The reader gets a look at the family life of some of the characters.

Moskin, Marietta. I Am Rosemarie. New York: John Day Co., 1972. A gripping story of a Jewish teenager living in Amsterdam during World War II.

Neufeld, John. Edgar Allan. New York: New American Library, 1968. A minister's family adopts a black baby but has to give him up due to outside pressures.

Platt, Kin. The Boy Who Could Make Himself Disappear. Philadelphia: Chilton, 1968. A sad story of a boy who is a victim of an unhappy marriage and divorce. His speech defect compounds his problem.

Steinbeck, John. The Red Pony. New York: Viking Press, 1945. A story of a young boy and his sorrel colt.

Wells, Rosemary. The Fog Comes on Little Pig Feet. New York: Dial Press, 1972. Because of family problems, a girl is sent away to a private school.

Many more books by the following authors: Honor Arundel, Betty Cavanna, Anne Emery, Jeannette Eyerly, Zoa Sherburne, Mary Stolz, Mai Wojceichowska.